

Model Water Efficient Landscape Ordinance Update 2015

Governor's Brown April 1st Drought Executive Order (B-19-25) directed the California Department of Water Resources (DWR) to update the State's Model Efficient Landscape Ordinance (MWELO) through an expedited regulation. . The directive specifically lists five items to address in revising the ordinance.

- Irrigation system efficiency standards
- Greywater usage
- Onsite storm water capture
- Limiting the percentage of turf planted in new landscapes
- Require reporting on the implementation and enforcement of the ordinance by local agencies

In undertaking this task, DWR met with and received input from the following stakeholder groups and trade organizations:

- Independent Technical Panel (ITP) - a group of 7 panelists with representatives from retail water suppliers, environmental organizations, the business community, wholesale water suppliers, and academia.
- Urban Stakeholder Committee - over 30 participants who provide input to DWR on water conservation, measurement and reporting activities for urban and agricultural water suppliers.
- Irrigation Association
- American Society of Irrigation Consultants
- California Associations of Nurseries and Garden Centers
- American Society of Landscape Architects
- California Landscape Contractors Association
- California Department of Housing and Community Development
- California Building Industry Association
- Association of Professional Landscape Designers
- California Urban Water Conservation Council
- California Department of Transportation
- Division of State Architect
- California Department of General Services
- California Building Standards Commission
- EcoLandscape California
- River-Friendly Landscaping
- Bay-Friendly Landscaping & Gardening Coalition
- California Native Plant Society
- Toro
- Rain Bird
- Hunter Industries
- Surfrider

DWR has two public meetings planned, the first on June 16th in Los Angeles and the second on June 19th in Sacramento. The California Water Commission will consider approving the ordinance at their July 15th meeting.

The proposed revisions require greater efficiencies than the landscape standards adopted by the Building Standards Commission (Commission) on May 29th. The Commission is aware that DWR may enact stricter measures and has committed to revise their standards to be consistent with the landscape ordinance.

Proposed Revisions:

Landscape Size Threshold

The landscape size threshold (the square footage above which projects are subject to the ordinance) has been reduced for all new constructions projects from 2500 sq. ft. to 500 sq. ft. Previously the threshold was 2500 sq. ft. for public and private development and 5000 sq. ft. for owner built custom homes.

Efficient Irrigation Systems

The following measures have been added to the ordinance:

- Dedicated landscape water meters or sub meters are required for residential landscape areas over 5000 sq. ft. and non-residential areas over 1000 sq. ft. (This brings the landscape ordinance into alignment with CalGreen requirements).
- All new irrigation systems will be required to have pressure regulators and master valves.
- Irrigation systems must be designed so that a precipitation rate of 1.0 inch per hour is not exceeded in any portion of the landscape.
- Require flow sensors that detect and report high flow conditions due to broken pipes and or popped sprinkler heads.
- Increased the minimum width of turf from 8 feet to 10 feet that can be irrigated with overhead irrigation (sprinklers). Areas of turf below this threshold must be irrigated with subsurface drip or other technology that produces no over spray or runoff.

Graywater Usage

A section (§492.15) was added to encourage the installation of graywater systems to provide on-site landscape irrigation water. All graywater systems shall conform to the California Plumbing Code (Title 24, Part 5, Chapter 16) and any applicable local ordinance standards.

Onsite Storm Water Capture

The Stormwater Management section (§492.16) is revised to require friable soil in landscape areas to maximize water retention and infiltration. Additional measures for increasing on-site storm water retention are recommended.

The revised ordinance also requires the application and incorporation to 6 inches deep of 4 yards of compost per 1000 sq. ft. of area planted to turf. This addition of organic matter and tillage increases the ability of soil to capture and hold stormwater.

Limiting the Portion of Landscapes that can be Covered in Turf

To limit the area of turf in landscapes, the landscape water budget (Maximum Applied Water Allowance) was reduced from 70% of the reference evaporation (ET_o) to 50% for residential areas, and to 40% of ET_o for non-residential areas. The 50% water budget reduces the area that can be planted to turf in the residential landscapes from 33% to 25%, while the 40% budget for commercial and institutional (non-residential) landscape does not provide enough water to permit the planting of turf. Turf installation is permitted in new commercial and institutional landscape areas when it is used for specific functions and purposes. The landscape ordinance water budget provides extra water allowances for functional turf (sports, recreational, picnic areas and areas irrigated with recycled water.)

In addition to the reduction in water budgets, no turf will be allowed in median strips or in parkways, unless the parkways is next to a parking strip and a flat surface is required to enter and exit vehicles.

Reporting

Per EO (B-19-25) the revised ordinance requires local agencies to report to DWR on the implementation and enforcement of the ordinance by December 31, 2015 and then by January 31st in subsequent years. Section 495 lists 11 specific items that have to be addressed as part of the annual reporting.

Other

Due to the short time frame, other more extensive revisions were not possible in this update, however the MWELO has been updated to add clarity and better define the purpose of water efficient landscape ordinances.

Public Meetings:

June 16, 2015 10:00 A.M. – 12:00 P.M.

Metropolitan Water District of Southern California
700 North Alameda Street
Los Angeles, CA 90012

To join this meeting: <https://resources.webex.com/resources/j.php?MTID=mf9ff1a0a6fcc7d4fedbfa57fa7bc3745>

Call-in toll-free number: 1-877-952-3588

Attendee access code: 590 225 6

June 19, 2015 10:00 A.M. – 12:00 P.M.

Resources Building Auditorium
1416 9th Street, 1st Floor
Sacramento, CA 95814

To join this meeting: <https://resources.webex.com/resources/j.php?MTID=m6aa000d2b9905eda9f9dbae9d86dc2c1>

Call-in toll-free number: 1-877-952-3588

Attendee access code: 590 225 6

Stakeholders may attend the public meetings and/or submit comments by email. **Public comments are due by Friday**

June 26, 2015. Send comments to: julie.saare-edmonds@water.ca.gov

Revised MWELO can be read here: <http://www.water.ca.gov/wateruseefficiency/landscapeordinance/>

This is the fourth year of California's drought. To learn about the actions the state has taken to manage our water systems and cope with the drought's impacts, visit Drought.CA.Gov. Every Californian should take steps to conserve water. Find out how at SaveOurWater.com.